



Week One: God's Desire

"I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me." John 17:20-23

Introduction

When Jesus was just hours from His death, He prayed that His followers would be one. Perfectly one. It was that important to Him.

If Jesus gave *attention* to oneness, we must give *intention* to oneness. We, as His church, must elevate our commitment to unity.

Think about it. If you knew you only had a few hours to live and you were crying out to God in prayer, what would be on your prayer list? My guess is that most of us would be praying for the people we would be leaving behind. People that we love and care about.

That's exactly what Jesus did. He prayed for the people that He loved. People that He was going to give His life for. People that He wanted to see lovingly live in harmony with each other, just as He lived in unity with the Heavenly Father. Perfectly one.

Perfectly one? *All* of His followers? *All of us*? Maybe it would work for just a few of us. You know, those who are easy to get along with. Those who agree with us about styles of music, and how we baptize people, and whether we use wine or grape juice for communion.

But that's not enough. Jesus prayed, *"...that they may all be one."* Everyone. He wants everyone who becomes one of His followers to live and walk together in unity. To be perfectly one.

Impossible? Yes... in our own strength. But God's got this. And He wants to work in and through us to do what's impossible for us to do on our own.

This week we find out why unity within the Body of Christ is so important as we examine a conversation Jesus had with His Father. We need to understand what He was saying, because He was praying for us. We are a part of that same group of Christ-followers that He loved so dearly and prayed so fervently for, that we would be one. Perfectly one.

May the things you learn this week from Jesus' prayer encourage you to fervently pursue unity in your relationships within your local church and the church at large, in both prayers and actions.

Group Video Discussion

Watch Video 1 God wants His Church to be one

Your notes:

Three significant relationships:

Questions for Group Discussion

1. On a scale of 1-10 (with 10 as best), how committed are you to pursuing oneness in God's family?
2. Why is oneness among God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit so important? How does this importance apply to the church?
3. In what ways have you experienced or seen a lack of unity hurt a church's witness to the world?
4. How have you seen a church's loving unity positively impact its witness to the world?
5. For oneness to prevail in our local church, what specific commitments or practices must we pursue?
6. What would need to change in your life if you were to commit to pursuing unity within our church?
With all believers?
7. If a person refuses to pursue unity, how could a local church or the church at large be hurt?

Personal Daily Devotions

Day 1

I do not ask for these only...

*"I do not ask for these only,
but also for those who will believe in me
through their word..."*

John 17:20

Even before the church came into existence, Jesus prayed for unity within the first century church, and within the twenty-first century church, and within every generation of believers in between. He knew that oneness was not a given. It was not going to happen without divine intervention and human intention.

Unity must be a constant pursuit in our prayers and our actions, because Jesus wants us to be perfectly one.

Now you might be thinking, "Is that even possible? There's no way we can all agree and get along! Just look at all the different churches we've divided into over the years – Catholics and Protestants, Baptists and Presbyterians and Lutherans..."

That wasn't Jesus' plan. He didn't intend for there to be a 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Church of Jerusalem. His desire was that His church would be one. One body. One family living life together in love, worshiping one Lord and one God.

But we've failed to be the church He wants us to be. And that should make us all the more pursue the unity that He still wants for His church. Complete unity within our local church and with all believers should be as important to us as it is to Jesus. 2000 years later His desire is still the same.

Your Personal Reflection and Application

Do you share Christ's concern for perfect unity among all of His followers? How do your prayers, words, and actions reflect or not reflect this concern?

How does knowing Jesus prayed for unity within His church give you hope?

How does it make you feel when believers can't get along? When conflicts can't be worked out?

What can you do to increase your commitment to maintaining unity with all followers of Christ, no matter what "church" they attend?

Day 2

That they may ALL be one...

*“That they also may be in us...all be one,
just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you...”*

John 17:21

Oneness is the Lord’s desire for everyone in His family, not just a sanctified few. Oneness must be every believer’s pursuit.

The standard is high. Just like God is one with Christ, and Christ is one with God, God wants His children to be one with Them and with each other.

God the Father and God the Son are family. Just like our earthly families have a unique bond that separates us from the rest of the world, God and Jesus have a bond that cannot be broken. And they have chosen to make it possible for us to be adopted into that family.

When we come into a relationship with God through Jesus, we also become bonded together with every other believer. We become family. And God wants each of us to be totally committed to that family.

But the reality is, because of our sin we have a hard time maintaining healthy relationships in our earthly families, and also within God’s family. We often focus too much on “me” instead of “we.” But in spite of our problems, we cannot change the fact that we are family.

And God’s desire for us is still the same. He wants us to be one family that lives life together in love. And if we each try our best to do that, we will move closer to experiencing the oneness that Jesus prayed for among His followers.

Your Personal Reflection and Application

How is a family hurt when family members take a “me” rather than “we” approach to life together?

When every family member lives for the good of the other family members, what is often the outcome?

The Father and Son live in perfect oneness with each other. What could have been the outcome had they not lived in harmony?

How committed are you to pursuing peace and harmony with other members of God’s family? Does your commitment to oneness need to grow? If so, in what way?

Day 3

That they may also be in Us...

"That they also may be in us..."

John 17:21

Oneness is a sign that God is in us and we are in God. It is the result of God's supernatural work in and through us. Just like God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit are one, we are one with Them, and with each other, through Christ.

But for us to live as one, to walk together as one body, we must abide in Christ. Intentionally. Moment-by-moment. Day-by-day. We must choose to follow God's ways instead of our own selfish ways.

While this matter will be our primary focus in Week Six of our **Perfectly One** study, two facts are worth noting now.

First, God's desire. The Lord wants us to live **in** Him. Think of it as living **in** the same home. He wants us to abide, remain, and dwell **in** Him. Now and forever. To live where He lives, as members of His family. To become like He is.

Give that some thought. God – who is love, harmony, peace, and joy – wants us to let Him fill us with all that He is so that it overflows out of our lives onto others around us.

Second, our decision. Each of us must intentionally decide if we want to dwell with God or not. We must choose to abide in Him, day-by-day, so He can transform our lives. So we can be one with Him and with every other member of His family.

Left to ourselves, we will struggle and fail in our attempts to live as one. But when we stay connected to God – when we abide in Him – we will dwell in unity with one another.

Your Personal Reflection and Application

Describe the home you grew up in.

How does the thought of abiding in Christ and becoming like Him appeal to you?

What things do you do (or could you do more of) to help you stay connected to God? To help you abide in Him?

A decision to abide with God is a decision to live in unity with the other members of His family. How do you feel about this part of being in God's family?

Day 4

That the world may believe...

"So that the world may believe that you have sent me."

John 17:21

Unity among believers can help unbelievers come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah. The Promised One. The Savior of the world. But in the same way, our lack of oneness can turn people away from believing in Jesus Christ for salvation.

Most of us know of people who want nothing to do with Jesus or the church because of the hypocrisy and sin that they have seen in people who call themselves Christians. We talk about loving one another, but they don't see it. We invite people to join God's family, but why would they if that family is characterized by quarrels, church splits, judgment, and cliques?

It's kind of like a person's attitude about marriage. It's not uncommon to hear someone say they have no interest in getting married because they grew up in a home where their parents constantly argued, yelled, and either kept threatening to get a divorce, or ended up getting divorced. So they now have no desire to get married and go through all of that misery.

Fortunately, some kids have a completely different experience. They saw their parents' imperfect yet unwavering love for each other. When mom and dad had problems, they didn't threaten divorce. They worked through their issues in healthy ways. What the kids saw gave them the desire to be part of that same kind of marriage for themselves.

The oneness of the church can have a similar impact on the world. A unified, loving church can attract unbelievers to Christ, rather than drive them away. It can lead them to say, "I want that for myself."

Your Personal Reflection and Application

How does the secular world generally view the church today?

How has the witness of the church helped or hindered your belief in Jesus Christ?

How have unbelievers you know been pushed away from Jesus, or drawn to Jesus, by the unity or lack of unity in a church? How has their response impacted you?

Have you faithfully pursued unity with all believers for the sake of its impact on a watching world? What practical things can you do to help build unity within the church?

Day 5

That they may be one like Us...

*“The glory that you have given me I have given to them,
that they may be one even as we are one.”*

John 17:22

Jesus reflected God’s glory on earth. What people saw in Jesus’ life and heard through His teaching was a clear expression of God’s indwelling presence. In Jesus, people saw God – His character, love, majesty, and power.

Jesus reflected God to the world so well because He was one with Him. God Himself was living within human flesh. And Jesus was committed to following God’s will and leading. And Jesus was good with that. God was glorified in all Jesus said and did.

God wants the same for us. He has placed His glory within us, and He wants our lives to reflect His glory. He wants His character, love, majesty, and power to be visible in all we say and do.

When Christ-followers are one with God and each other, God’s glory is displayed through our lives. It’s visible for all to see, including the lost world around us. Can you think of a more important incentive for living as one with other members of God’s family?

What a difference it would make if every follower of Jesus let God’s glory – that He has given us – shine through our lives. If day-by-day we displayed His character, love, majesty, and power. We would experience the oneness that God wants for all of us. The world would see the truth of who God is. And on top of all that, God would be glorified.

When we are one with each other, as God the Father and Son are one, God is glorified in and through us. And everyone benefits.

Your Personal Reflection and Application

Do you see signs of God's glory reflected in your life?

Oneness is a sign of God's glory in us. Oneness first with God, and then with other Christ-followers. To what degree do you desire and work toward oneness in these two areas of your life?

Can you think of a time in your life when God was glorified, or not, due to unity or lack of unity with others within the church?

The Apostle Paul said, "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." (1 Corinthians 10:31) How do you see dwelling in unity with others fitting into this command?

Day 6

That they may be perfectly one...

*"I in them and you in me,
that they may become perfectly one."*

John 17:23

Perfect unity within any group of people seems impossible. Yet Jesus made it His intentional prayer. He asked God to make it happen. And since Jesus always prayed in line with God's will, God Himself would like to see the same.

That they may become perfectly one.

It implies that they aren't perfectly one yet. But His desire is that they would become one. Even if it takes a long time for them to get there, the journey toward oneness must be taken. He knew so much depended on it.

Too big a goal? Unlikely to ever happen? Impossible? Jesus didn't think so.

Did you notice the words, *I in them and you in me*? That tells us that it's possible because God is in us! What we can't do, God can do. What man thinks is impossible, is possible with God. The impossible things God did through Jesus, He can also now do through us.

If Jesus wants us to be perfectly one, then we should want it too. And He's even given us the power to do it. So we should pray for, and work toward, becoming perfectly one.

Even when we fall short, each step we take toward unity with other believers is worth it. We don't give up but with God's help we continue to pursue becoming perfectly one.

Your Personal Reflection and Application

Can you think of a time in your life when you aimed for perfection in something? Did you achieve it?

From what we've already considered this week about unity, why should you be making a big deal out of becoming perfectly one?

How does your desire for oneness compare to that of Jesus? What one thing can you do today to raise your commitment to perfect oneness?

Take a moment to consider the times you've fallen short. In light of John 17:23 and other verses and experiences, when is it hardest for you to be one with other Christ-followers?

Day 7

That the world may know...

*“So that the world may know that you sent me
and loved them even as you loved me.”*

John 17:23

God wants everyone to know that He loves them like He loves Jesus. Give that some thought. It's pretty amazing! The love God has for sinful imperfect people is the same love God the Father has for God the Son, who is perfect in every way.

The ultimate proof of God's love for sinners was demonstrated when Jesus died for us (Romans 5:8), so that those who believe in Him wouldn't die but would have eternal life (John 3:16).

Unfortunately, one of the things that can stand in the way of the world coming to know God's forgiveness and love is the unloving behavior of His followers toward each other.

When believers fail to live as one, unbelievers may not come to know of God's saving love. Believers can stand in the way of unbelievers coming to believe in the One who is the way to eternal life. Instead of building a bridge that connects people to God, they become a stumbling block that stands between the unsaved and God.

The likelihood of someone coming to know and believe that God loves them increases when unity among believers increases. When believers are one, unbelievers will come to know of God's love and be changed forever.

That fact alone should challenge us and encourage us to do our best to work toward unity within our local churches and among all those who are followers of Jesus.

Your Personal Reflection and Application

What were the circumstances of how you came to know of God's saving and forgiving love?

How does it impact you to know that your oneness with other believers – or lack of it - can either help or hinder the Gospel message from being heard or received?

Do you know any unbelievers who have stumbled over disunity that they've seen among Christians? If an unbeliever uses disunity among Christians as an excuse to not believe, what could you say to them?